How To STEAL FOOD From The Supermarket

HOW TO STEAL FOOD FROM THE SUPERMARKET

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Introduction

Dumpster divers and diet dog food. It is obscene that any nation has people so poorly fed that they literally eat garbage alongside people so affluent their household pets need to lose a few pounds.

We see this so frequently that we no longer notice. The stark contrast of underfed humans and overfed poodles has become such a commonplace that it no longer outrages us.

But can we imagine it in any other westernized country? Sweden, Japan, Switzerland, Canada or France? It is difficult to picture. It is a uniquely American phenomenon.

America. The land of opportunity. The world's most powerful country. A country so generous to its poor that one out of ten food purchases is made with food stamps.

America. The world's breadbasket. A country blessed with more high-quality arable farmland than any other on earth. A country where the availability of a bewildering selection of foodstuffs is taken for granted. A gourmet's paradise.

But walk behind the supermarket, where the big green garbage bins are found. There you will find people scrounging for items deemed unsuitable for human consumption.

What's wrong here? If food is such a bargain and the poor are so well treated, why are people digging food out of the dumpsters?

If you are one of America's working poor, or even middle class, you may find your food dollar inadequate for a modest selection of decent food. Our much-vaunted food production and distribution systems, widely described as the world's best, just aren't doing the job for many people -- including you. It is for you that this book is written.

Theft, of course, is a crime. But people sifting through dumpsters behind supermarkets that sell Cycle 3 is also a crime, ethically speaking. Which is the larger crime, I will leave to others to decide.

I see these things daily. I'm a security guard at a supermarket affiliated with a major regional chain and I know how people shoplift food. I know how to do it right; I know how to do it wrong. I arrest the ones who do it wrong; I'm merely suspicious of the ones who do it right. Some are doing it so well I wouldn't suspect them in a hundred years.

But I don't blame any of them; I've seen too much greed and profiteering on the part of the "respectable" retailers for that. I'm just doing my job. If you want to know how to steal food, or to obtain it at marked-down prices, I will tell you. Go fix yourself a sandwich and a beer, Gentle Reader, and dig into Chapter One.

Chapter 1

How the System Screws You

What's wrong with the system? Isn't food pretty inexpensive in the United States?

Well, that's what they tell us, in commercial after endless commercial. Americans, they tell us, pay less, as a percentage of their income, than any other people on earth. So we're getting a bargain, right?

Wrong. Food in America is overpriced. It is a somewhat smaller slice of our income only because Americans, on average, earn more than people elsewhere; not because our food is cheap. The percentage of our income spent on food is small only because we spend so much more on other things, such as houses and cars.

Not only is food too expensive at the supermarket, its price is downright outrageous when one considers its hidden costs.

The vast majority of taxpayers have no idea how much of their taxes go to farm subsidies, and the government wants to keep it that way. If we all knew, there would be hell to pay.

Forget about the romantic view of the American family farm, it simply no longer exists. Jethro isn't getting up at dawn to slop the hogs, and Ma and Pa aren't plowing the south forty and praying for rain. Modern agribusinesses are producing food on a huge scale, and the operations are largely automated.

There's nothing especially wrong with that, of course. Greater efficiency and productivity help nearly everyone, even if a few small family operations are wiped out by the competition.

What's wrong is that the competition isn't fair. Modern farmers benefit from an incredibly lucrative maze of government benefits, paid for by you and me, to produce the goods we buy at the neighborhood supermarket.

The price of the farmers' goods is propped up by government programs, which we finance with our taxes. The higher farm prices, of course, mean grocers pay more for the foodstuffs they sell. Grocery shoppers--you and I--then pay higher prices for our food so the grocer can make a profit.

In other words, a portion of your tax dollar is applied directly to programs designed to make your grocery bills higher. We are literally paying to be ripped off. A more outrageous system is difficult to imagine.

Do our poor family farmers deserve some sort of financial aid? No. Farmers in this country aren't poor; to the contrary, the bigger producers are quite wealthy.

But the farmers have political clout. And they've used that influence to persuade Congress to prop up the prices of nearly every commodity from wheat to sugar beets, milk to honey, and soybeans to corn.

This price inflation is achieved by guaranteeing subsidies to farmers who can't sell all they grow at a predetermined "fair" price. Either consumers buy their food at a predetermined price, or the government steps in and buys it with your tax dollars. The farmer can't lose. Even if you don't eat it, you're paying for it.

The government's toadying to farmers has gone so far as literally slaughtering healthy dairy cows. Reducing the number of dairy cattle decreases milk supplies, which leads to higher prices for milk. And that's in addition to buying surplus milk which is simply poured down the nearest drain, which is done regularly and routinely. Our government frequently sells wheat overseas, most notoriously to Russia, at a loss. At a loss to itself? Of course not! At a loss to you, the taxpayer.

Many farmers, some of whom do no farming whatsoever, receive money from the government not to grow any crops on their land. The Agriculture Department estimates the income the farmer could expect to earn from crops grown on a parcel of land. Then, incredibly, the government pays the "farmer" 90% of that estimate for the farmer to grow nothing. I don't know about you, but I'd gladly take a 10% pay cut if I didn't have to go to work.

The fact is, the average American farmer receives about one fourth of his annual income from a variety of direct subsidies from the government; that is, from you and me.

All this artificial price boosting, of course, raises the price of food sold at the supermarket. In other words, fellow taxpayer, you're being ripped off twice: once when you pay your income taxes, again when you go grocery shopping. We are all, quite literally, forced to pay the government to raise our own grocery bills.

We must all pay taxes, of course. Tax evasion is the sort of thing our government takes seriously. If you wish to cheat on your taxes, you do so at your own rather considerable risk. I do not encourage tax evasion.

What I do encourage is stealing food. The grocer, regardless of what he tells us, is not a prisoner of farm prices. It has been shown time and time again that grocery prices rise whenever a drought or whatever makes a commodity scarce. But when have you seen prices decrease in the years following the drought? Not often, I'd wager.

Despite what food retailers say about profit margins, supermarkets are hugely profitable. Much of that profit, alas, comes from fraud. A consumer rights magazine recently reported that about half of all fish, for example, are overpriced and misidentified, almost always to the grocer's advantage. In addition, most had begun to spoil and many were contaminated with toxins.

Likewise, beef and pork cuts are not always what their labels claim. It is almost impossible for the government to check the accuracy of labeling by your local butcher, and he knows it. How can you tell if the hamburger is really "85% lean?" Do you really know the difference between "prime" and "choice"? Me either, but we pay more for one than the other, even if the meat is inferior.

So, the farmer may be the direct beneficiary of our government's largess, but the big supermarkets are raking in their share as well. In fact, our entire food production, distribution and retail system is little more than a huge daisy chain of subsidies, price-fixing and bribes.

In a perfect capitalist society, grocery prices would be kept relatively low as a result of competition among retailers. Alas, this doesn't work in modern America, largely because there is little genuine competition.

Although there are quite a few supermarkets, the odds are that there are only three or four, at most, in your immediate area. The fewer the competitors, of course, the milder the competition. In most cases, in fact, competition is entirely illusory. The temptation to fix prices so all stores can profit equally and extravagantly is often irresistible.

The supermarkets run huge newspaper ads, of course, but there is a tendency (as most shoppers have probably noticed) to take turns offering sale prices on certain products. Store A offers marked-down chicken breasts this week; store B offers the same deal two weeks later.

The big newspaper ads not only serve to create an illusion of competition, but they're damned expensive to boot. Who pays for those ads? You do, through higher food prices. A big chunk of your food budget money supports a scam whose primary effect is to raise your food prices still further.

The newspapers and stores benefit, but you get screwed. And you pay through the nose for the privilege of getting screwed.

For these reasons, among others, I advocate fighting back in the form of shoplifting. Nutrition shouldn't be a luxury in a country as rich and productive as ours. It ought to be a right.

Your tax dollar subsidized the farmer, and your grocery dollar subsidized the advertising. A dollar for a loaf of bread may seem fair enough until you realize that you've already paid two bucks, and now they want a third. Stealing's not really stealing if you've already paid for the merchandise.

The Supermarket

If you're a city-slicker like me, the aisles of a supermarket are as close to food production as you'll ever get.

Supermarkets, especially the big chains, routinely bleat the same old song about their tiny profit margins. Three percent is a number frequently mentioned.

This, to borrow a phrase from Ronald Reagan, is voodoo economics. Most supermarket managers are paid annual salaries approaching, and often reaching, six figures. The department heads and assistant managers are not far behind.

In addition, many chains lavish incredible amounts of money on their managers in the form of profit-sharing. The manager of the store I patrol will retire at the age of 38, very nearly a millionaire. Most of that money will be in the form of profit-sharing, fully vested after his twentieth year of work.

This man is competent, honest and likeable, but he's not a financial genius. He's just a regular guy who went straight to work in a market after finishing high school. There are many thousands of supermarket managers in similar situations.

Profit-sharing is just one of the tricks used to disguise supermarket chain income. Anything they can possibly pass off as an operating expense is subtracted from the profit column.

The supermarket chains would like you to think the three percent figure simply represents the markup on a can of soup or whatever, and many folks have fallen for that line. But it's simply not true.

Some expensive items are moderately marked up 25 percent or so. Most are marked up more, over 40 percent. Some items, such as fancy cuts of meat, loose snack foods and candies, are greatly marked up, sometimes on the order of several hundred percent.

The store I patrol has bins containing loose candy that the customer may scoop into a plastic bag. Kids steal that candy by the double handful, but I've been told not to stop them. A single pound of candy, priced at about three and half bucks, pays for the entire bin load. Only one paying customer is needed to balance the thefts.

Sometimes the profiteering is so heartless it hurts. My store is in a poor neighborhood, and many of our customers are alcoholics. Consequently, we sell a good bit more beer than average for our particular chain. Is the store's management content to simply enjoy the higher profits? Nope. Our store charges more for beer than others in its chain. After all, most of our neighborhood alcoholics don't own cars.

This cynical attitude is akin to that of a ghetto heroin pusher. "Sorry, kid. The first few grams were cheap, but I've got to raise prices..."

Supermarket losses, known euphemistically as "shrinkage," are the result of several factors. Employee pilferage and perishable food spoilage account for a considerable chunk -- often a majority -- of shrinkage. Shoplifting accounts for the rest.

Supermarkets, of course, would have you believe that shoplifting accounts for all of it. They're lying. And what's worse, they're whining.

Don't shed a tear for the poor supermarkets. You could steal a truckload of food every day without putting a dent in their profit and loss status. These guys are raking it in, and they're paying their stockers, baggers and cashiers chump change for the actual work.

Unless you're shoplifting from a genuine mom-and-pop operation (which I strongly discourage), you're not hurting anyone. Steal food from the supermarkets and don't feel guilty about it. Those weasels have been stealing from you since you were weaned, and believe me, they aren't missing any sleep over it.

Chapter 2

Reasonably Legal Methods of Reducing Your Grocery Bill

Short of actually shoplifting, are there other, reasonably legal methods of reducing your grocery bills? Yes, and everyone who qualifies should use them.

Food Stamps

The most obvious one is using food stamps. Food stamps are issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to families judged sufficiently needy. They come in several denominations, just like paper money, down to one dollar stamps.

The government, in its typically patronizing fashion, has decided that food stamps cannot be used to buy non-food items. In addition, our federal schoolmarms have put all alcoholic beverages and tobacco products off limits.

One effect of this is that some alcoholics repeatedly purchase items with food stamps whose prices require change amounting to the better part of a dollar. Since one-dollar stamps are the smallest printed, all change less than a dollar is given in the form of coins, not stamps.

After several such purchases, the drunks amass enough actual money to buy a bottle of beer or wine. It's a pitiful, wasteful thing, due entirely to official prudery.

Can you get food stamps? If you have a job, probably not. And even if you do qualify, they're not always worthwhile.

Some years ago, when I was fresh out of college, I went to work for a small newspaper for just a bit over the minimum wage. I was supporting my unemployed girlfriend and money was tight. So I applied for food stamps.

I found I was qualified--just barely--for food stamps. But the bad news was that I had to buy them. Each month I could buy $92 in food stamps for $70. I would come out $22 ahead.

The problem was, however, that I didn't have $70, and, furthermore, we didn't eat $92 worth of groceries a month. The situation was ludicrous, like giving a bag lady a $500 gift certificate toward a new Mercedes-Benz. Some charity is just too expensive to accept.

The only people who benefit substantially from food stamps are the unemployed, especially those with many children. If you have a job, even a lousy one, food stamps probably aren't worth the bother.

There is, however, one way you can benefit from food stamps. It isn't legal, but it's very low risk: simply buy food stamps from the poor people who get them free. The street value of food stamps is very low, about 10 to 20 cents on the dollar.

Typically, the people willing to sell their food stamps are drug addicts and drunks in desperate need of cash. If you don't mind subsidizing someone's self-destructive habit, you may wish to buy their food stamps.

Coupons

We've all seen those consumer-tips type TV programs where some perky young housewife person encourages you to clip cents-off coupons. Invariably, the camera follows her to the grocery store where she pays for an overflowing cart of food with a bundle of coupons and $1.12.

How does she do it? If she does it every time she buys food, I don't have the slightest idea how she does it. My guess is she has saved her best coupons for that once-a-year demonstration.

She has probably written various food manufacturers commenting on their products or whatnot. This inevitably results in a form letter from the manufacturer accompanied by several extremely generous coupons--often worth several dollars apiece, or simply allowing you to receive an item at no cost.

There's nothing wrong with that approach, but it's unlikely to work more than a few times a year. Another coupon strategy is to patronize stores that offer to double coupons.

The problems of coupon doubling are, appropriately enough, two-fold: Stores that routinely double coupons tend to have slightly higher prices; and most of them limit doubling to one dollar. That is, a 30-cent coupon is worth 60 cents, a 50-cent coupon is worth a buck, but a 75-cent coupon is limited to one dollar as well.

My advice is to go ahead and clip the coupons and take them to a store that doubles them. But buy items for which you have no coupons where the prices are generally lowest. That will almost always be a different store.

But be aware of another problem with coupons. My wife once came home from a shopping trip triumphantly announcing a 15% savings, due to the use of coupons on many items. The grocery receipt did, indeed, show a 15% reduction from the subtotal.

But I noticed she had bought expensive name brand products instead of the house brands and generics we usually purchase. I had time to kill, so I

drove back to the store with the receipt and compared the savings achieved with coupons to the savings available in cheaper brands. As you may have guessed by now, her 15% savings nearly evaporated, reduced to barely 1%.

So the effect of coupons is primarily to determine what brands you are willing to buy, rather than what your weekly grocery bill will be.

If you genuinely prefer the fancy brands, and would buy them even without the coupon, you can save significant money. If you'd be just as happy with the house brands or generics, double-check to see if you're really saving anything.

Generics

If you usually shun generics as inferior, make sure you're not just fooling yourself. I have devised a simple test that has fooled everyone who's taken it. Using a product where strong brand preference is common, simply have a taste test where the person tasting doesn't know which brand is which.

For example, almost all beer drinkers swear their brand is the only acceptable brew, but I've always been suspicious of such claims. All beer tastes about the same to me.

Mark three glasses with numbers written on a piece of tape. Pour a can of beer into each one, picked at random, and make a list of which beer is in each glass. Keep the list hidden from the beer "expert."

Use the taster's favorite brand, a brand he claims to dislike, and a bargain brand -- generic beer if available. I have given this test to several people with strong brand preferences, and not a one has successfully identified his own brand, or even preferred it to the others. The cheapest is sometimes the favorite. Beer drinkers may find this embarrassing or humbling, but it shows just how susceptible we all are to advertising and the opinions of others. Besides, it's a little-known fact that the pop-top can costs more to produce than its contents, regardless of brand.

It also, of course, suggests another perfectly legal way to keep your grocery prices down: Unless, you've tried them and genuinely dislike them, cheap brands and generics are small, but significant, money-savers.

Damaged Goods

One more legal method of reducing food prices is to buy the stuff from the "bargain display." All grocery stores have an area, often just a grocery cart or two, featuring greatly reduced prices on food in damaged containers.

This primarily takes the form of dented cans and crumpled cardboard boxes. This damage almost never affects the quality or taste of the food, but people just won't pay full price for a dented can when an undamaged one is available.

Bargain bins also commonly contain items being discontinued or sample-size items for which no shelf space exists. Produce and meat departments usually have their own separate bargain items, typically vegetables and beef a little past their prime. They may be slightly discolored, but if you plan to eat them within a day or so, they are quite acceptable.

To take best advantage of this sort of thing, ask the department managers when the marked-down stuff is put out. They'll be happy to tell you, since they're especially eager to move the discounted items quickly. Typically, it's at the end of the day, after the store has locked its doors. The damaged goods are culled from the displays by the store's "blockers," the guys who stock and arrange the shelf displays after the last customers have left. The best bargains are often to be found when the store first opens in the morning.

Contrary to popular belief, the risk of contracting a deadly disease like botulism from a dented can is virtually nonexistent. Botulism poisoning, which is rare, is more likely to make a can bulge from internal pressure. Buy the dented cans, but avoid bulging ones (and point them out to the manager).

Chapter 3

Illegal (But Low-Risk) Methods Of Saving Money

Let us now leave the realm of reasonably legal money-saving techniques and explore some illegal, but low-risk, methods of saving money at the grocery store.

These methods are low-risk because they do not involve out-and-out shoplifting, that is, actually sneaking stolen merchandise out the door. Regardless of whether a store employs a security guard, you are very unlikely to be arrested if you don't actually try to walk out with something. The prospect of a retaliatory lawsuit for false arrest scares the hell out of store management, so they tend to tread lightly. You can use that fact to your own advantage.

If the very idea of stealing things makes you nervous, you can take a very safe and passive approach.

Dent Your Own Cans

In the previous chapter, we looked at big mark-downs on dented cans. Well, why wait around for the right cans to fall off a shelf and get discounted? Why not dent some yourself?

Consider the humble tin can: They're not made of tin anymore, but the concept has worked for a couple of hundred years. Tin cans are efficient containers because of the inherent strength of the cylinder. You can roll a piece of paper into a cylinder, stand it on one end, and it will support a brick.

But the strength of a cylinder runs strictly along its vertical axis. That permits vertically stacked cans to approach the ceiling without danger of collapse. But put a cylinder on its side and all bets are off.

It simply doesn't take much strength to crunch a major dent into the side of a tin can. If you can't manage it through grip strength, just place the can's side against the outer edge of a display shelf and lean your weight against it. It will dent.

Do not, of course, be too obvious. Once you master the technique, it's easy to do it one-handed while pretending to read the label on an item in your other hand. Magicians call this "misdirection." Nobody will notice what your "inactive" hand is doing.

Denting cans is something that you can't benefit from until the following day, when they've been marked down. To be assured of getting a marked-down item, damage several of the item you want to buy. Other bargain-hunters will benefit from your tactics, and there's nothing wrong with that.

Damaging Other Items

Cans aren't the only things you can damage. Cardboard boxes can be ripped or crushed. Often, the contents are not affected. For example, a box of Tuna Helper contains two sealed pouches. Damaging the box, if the pouches aren't torn open, does no real harm. But the product is likely to be marked down. As with cans, damage several.

Less reliable, but worth a shot, are meat and produce. Rip the plastic wrap on a couple of steaks near the store's closing time, then check them the next day. Since ripped plastic will speed discoloration of the meat, some stores may mark it down rather than re-wrap it.

In the produce department, bruise or make small cuts in cantaloupes and other melons. Dig a thumbnail into a few apples, oranges and such. This will cause a small area of discoloration, which may lead to a mark-down. Check them the next morning. If they aren't marked down, point them out to the produce clerk. After all, you're just being helpful, right?

Cheating With Coupons

Another method that carries virtually no risk is to use coupons for items not purchased. If you get caught you merely claim it was an honest mistake.

This approach is much easier now than it used to be, thanks to the nearly ubiquitous automatic laser scanners used by cashiers. Since the cashier needs only run the item over the scanner's window, she is likely to pay no attention to what was actually purchased.

What she will pay attention to is whether the coupons' dates have expired. Make sure the coupons you use are not out of date.

Although this scam is easy and reasonably safe, there are some precautions worth noting. First, don't overdo it. Don't hand the cashier coupons for five giant jugs of laundry detergent if you haven't bought anything that size. Even the dullest cashier is likely to double-check something so obviously suspicious.

Second, it's a good idea not to hand the coupons to the cashier until the bag boy has already bagged most of your purchases. She is unlikely to bother with un-bagging stuff just to check your coupons.

Supermarkets like coupons, and that is to your advantage. The store not only gets the face value of the coupon, but the manufacturer also pays a few cents above and beyond the face value. This is called a "handling fee," but "bribe" might be a more accurate description. It's the retailer's reward for accepting a manufacturer's coupons.

If you read the fine print on virtually any grocery cents-off coupon, there is a provision that the retailer must be able to provide documentation that he has actually sold items corresponding to the number of coupons submitted to the manufacturer, or words to that effect.

This is to discourage retailers from clipping coupons and throwing them in with those used by customers to get a few more bucks back.

This is an utterly empty threat, and everyone involved knows it. A retailer can submit any reasonable number of coupons absolutely secure in the knowledge that no manufacturer could possibly prove any impropriety.

And at least some retailers do exactly that. It seems petty, given the relatively low value of most coupons, but I've seen store managers routinely dumping handfuls of unused coupons into store safes.

That's one reason why retailers don't really much care if you use a coupon for something you didn't buy. The store submits the coupon anyway, breaks even on what you saved, then makes a small profit on the "handling charge."

The only circumstance where the coupon may be rejected by the manufacturer is if it's out of date. That's why the date is usually the only thing the cashier checks; and that's why it's the one thing you need to get right.

So, clip those coupons and put them in a coupon file organized by date, and use them. You can use them for products you actually buy, for products you don't buy, or, best of all, both. But they're free, and there's no excuse not to use them.

Chapter 4

Illegal Methods Short of Outright Shoplifting

Okay, so far we've dealt with techniques that are legal, or, if illegal, very unlikely to get you in trouble. Now we're going to really break the law.

However, as with the previous chapter, we're still going to consider things short of blatant shoplifting (we'll get to that soon enough). As mentioned before, you're unlikely to be arrested for anything short of actually carrying shoplifted merchandise out the door, so there's still some measure of safety. But make no mistake, this stuff, at least theoretically, could get you in trouble.

We're going to shoplift out in the open, so to speak. That is, we're going to carry everything we swipe through the checkout lines. We aren't going to conceal anything except the item's real price.

Marking Down Prices Yourself

At the store where I work, the butcher marks down meat prices with a red ball point pen. Dented cans are marked down with a broad black Magic Marker. The produce manager slaps new labels over old ones to reduce the price of damaged goods.

We've already seen how to deliberately damage merchandise to cause a price reduction. Let's go one more step and mark it down ourselves.

Make note, as I did above, of how different departments mark merchandise down in price. Carry the appropriate pens and markers into the store and go to work.

But before you can assign a new price, you need to eliminate the old one. Again, we can use the modern laser scanner to our benefit.

The idea is to prevent the scanner from reading the correct price from the package. This is normally accomplished by marking through the UPC, or bar code, printed on the package. This is trickier than it sounds.

The normal inclination is to draw a thick horizontal line from one end of the bar code to the other. Don't do it, it won't work. The lines that make up the bar code are taller than they need to be. If you draw a horizontal line across them, perpendicular to the individual lines, you have simply changed one tall bar code into two short ones, both of which can still be read.

Instead, make a broad, black vertical mark, parallel to the other lines, but much heavier. The line needs to be near the center of the code, and broad enough to cover several bars. This is because most bar codes contain redundant information, to permit the bar code reader to double-check its reading. Several lines need to be completely obscured to do the trick. And don't forget that the white spaces between lines are also read by the scanner; obscure at least one.

Now the food container cannot be read by the scanner, and the cashier will be forced out of her normal zombie mode and actually read the label. You, of course, having previously purchased marked-down merchandise from the department in question, know exactly how it's done. Use the same sort of writing utensil, a similar handwriting style, and a reasonable discount for out-of-date or damaged merchandise. Each department will have its own style. Don't use the butcher's style to mark down the green beans.

It is essential that you not be seen doing this. Most stores won't arrest you for it, since it's not a clear-cut case of larceny. But you're likely to be challenged and, at the least, embarrassed. You may be photographed and barred from returning to the store.

The keys to getting away with this are practice and proper attire. Practice is simple enough. Use labels from items you've bought until it's second nature. As for attire, wear something with long, voluminous sleeves.

Don't worry about the business end of a pen or marker. It's the back end that's most likely to be seen. If you doubt that, simply pick up a pen or pencil and write with it. Your fingers pretty well hide the tip, right? It's the rest of the marker, moving around in exaggerated circles and slashes, that catches the eye.

You'll need a sleeve large and long enough to cover the marker. That's simple in winter weather, but even in summer it can be managed. Use your imagination. I don't know what you have in your wardrobe; I don't even know your sex. But you probably have, or can purchase, something with long, billowy sleeves.

This partial concealment, combined with quickness resulting from practice, will minimize the chances of getting caught. As with other techniques, don't overdo it. A heaping cart filled with nothing but marked-down items is likely to draw attention.

Switching Packages

The development of bar code readers has eliminated the price stickers that used to be on all retail merchandise, so simple price tag switching, so common among shoplifters in the past, is rarely feasible. But fear not, every system has its weaknesses, and bar code readers are no exception.

The bar code system's weakness is, ironically, its perceived strength. The cashiers become lazy and trust it completely. You can take advantage of that.

For example, I like to keep a 200-watt light bulb in my reading lamp. But 200-watt bulbs cost more than lower wattage bulbs. This has little to do with manufacturing cost, of course. One kind of bulb costs about the same as another to make. The light bulb manufacturers are simply taking advantage of the general perception that more watts ought naturally to cost more.

As you may have gathered by now, I disapprove of that sort of profiteering. Having noticed that 200-watt and 150-watt bulbs have the same exterior dimensions and come in similar-sized packages, I simply swap them. The cashier, in her usual stand-up coma, trusts the "infallible" bar code reader completely. I pay for a 150-watt bulb and get a 200-watt unit. No sweat.

This technique is useful with camera film, cassette tapes, medications and other non-food items often sold in supermarkets. Take a leisurely stroll through your market and take note of various items that can be switched from one container to another. Happy hunting! I'll bet you'll find plenty.

For example, does your grocery store have a grinder for fresh coffee beans? Most do. My favorite store has Eight O'clock brand coffee, which is inexpensive. The same company offers fancier variations, such as Bokar. Dump the Bokar beans in the grinder bin, pour the Eight O'Clock beans into the Bokar bag and place the Eight O'Clock bag under the grinder. Save an easy buck, and just act innocently befuddled if anyone challenges you.

Some stores also offer really expensive flavored beans for those who can afford them. Mix and match. Have fun.

Many egg cartons will accommodate any size egg, from small to jumbo. Under the guise of checking for cracked shells, why not place extra-large eggs in the medium carton?

Slashing Vegetables and Prices Simultaneously

If you buy fresh vegetables by the pound, you're familiar with the frustration of paying for the parts you're going to throw away. No problem. Just carry a well-sharpened pocket knife. One quick slash saves you from having to pay for chewy asparagus and broccoli stems.

Chapter 5 Scamming the Scanner

Okay, let's escalate to the next level of larceny. Again, we will target the laser scanner's weak points.

Substitute Bar Codes

Start saving the bar codes from products in your home. The best ones will be printed on thin plastic containers, such as bread bags or the slick paper wrapped around cardboard boxes. Additionally, they should be from inexpensive items, say, two dollars or less.

Use a glue stick to coat the backs of the bar codes with adhesive, then stick them to a sheet of wax paper. The wax should keep them from adhering very tightly to the paper, allowing you to peel off pre-glued bar codes as needed in the store.

Find a product that costs more than your price cutoff level ($2.00 in our above example) and whose color and texture are reasonably close to those of your bar codes. Peel the bar code off your wax paper and completely cover the product's real code.

When the cashier scans the expensive product (a $5.99 box of powdered milk, for example) the bar code reader will tally the lower price (a $1.12 loaf of bread).

Two factors make this method a bit more dangerous than those in the previous chapters. One, if you're caught, acting confused won't help. The piece of wax paper with attached bar codes will prove your guilt. Most stores will prosecute you.

Second, the cash register display will not only indicate the lower price, it will also identify the product by name. In other words, when the cashier scans the powdered milk, the display will read: BREAD $1.12.

This doesn't necessarily mean your methods will be discovered. After all, lots of things could cause the improper reading, including an improperly programmed scanner or an improperly encoded piece of merchandise.

But if someone notices that several items in your cart carry phony bar codes, you're likely to be thrown out or even arrested. For that reason, it's best to use this technique with a cashier who knows what you're doing, but doesn't care.

This is much simpler than it sounds. Cashiers are usually high school kids, retirees or poorly educated people. What they have in common is a willingness to tolerate abysmal pay and long hours of standing in one position.

If you get a chance to talk with one of the cashiers in reasonable privacy, it's easy to get her (I use the feminine pronoun because most cashiers are women) to complain about her pay and working conditions. Now is the time to tell her what you're doing with the fake bar codes.

"It must be really irritating standing there all day for peanuts while your do-nothing manager rakes in the serious dough..." An opening line like that will get her talking.

Since her ox isn't being gored (she can always claim she didn't notice the scam) and since it is the store and its overpaid managers who qualify for profit-sharing getting ripped off, she won't care what you're doing.

"Sliding"

You can, and should, take this a step further. If you and a cashier have an understanding (you may want to pay her a modest monthly bribe), she can "slide" some of your merchandise for you.

"Sliding" is the opposite of scanning, and lots of cashiers do it for their friends. Instead of dragging your purchases over the scanner's window, she slides them around the side of it. No purchase is rung up and the item costs you nothing.

As with other scams, don't overdo this one. Cashiers who slide a lot get caught (believe me, the security guard isn't just watching the customers). Ideally, she should slide only a small number of your purchases, preferably the most expensive ones.

Scanner Subtraction

If your cashier is a bit of a risk-taker, there are a couple of variations on the sliding scam. The cashier can go ahead and scan the product, then scan it a second time after hitting a button on her register. This tells the register to delete the previous input.

The registers have this capability because the scanners sometimes scan the same item twice, overcharging the customer. Every system has a method of quickly subtracting the second scan, and it can be used to help you steal food.

Phony Coupon

Another approach available from a friendly cashier is the phony discount coupon. With this approach, she scans the item you're buying then quickly scans the bar code on a cents-off coupon she keeps handy for friends. Even though you didn't have a coupon for that item, most systems will register the discount anyway. A good cashier can do this so quickly the eye literally can't catch it in action.

The Risks

These systems that rely on a friendly cashier are not entirely foolproof. They can be detected if the cashier in question is already under suspicion for helping her buddies.

In most stores there is an inconspicuous display screen in the manager's office. Management can use the screen to monitor activity at any of the store's registers. If the manager sees you buy a box of powdered milk, but his screen identifies it as a loaf of house-brand bread, he'll figure out something's wrong.

You may be arrested, and if he suspects complicity on the part of the cashier, she'll be fired. If you claim innocence in court, the manager or arresting officer will produce a second, back-up receipt produced by the store's computer. You will be convicted.

None of this is meant to frighten you; the cashiers almost never get caught helping anyone. It's just a reminder to be careful. It's much safer to obtain the cooperation of a cashier who's worked at the store long enough to be trusted. The cashiers who get the most scrutiny are those recently hired, especially if they get frequent visits from friends hanging around the store. Those are the cashiers to avoid.

Chapter 6

Full-Fledged, Hard-Core, Stick-It-In-Your-Pants-And-Walk-Out-The-Door Shoplifting

If the previously discussed methods of reducing your food bill seem insufficient, let's get on to some serious, stuff-it-in-your-pants shoplifting. The food will be free, you won't need to bribe a cashier or swap bar codes. On the other hand, getting caught often means going to jail.

The mechanics of shoplifting, that is, where you stuff your loot and so forth, are relatively unimportant (although we'll discuss them). The important thing is to draw no attention to yourself in the process.

The Basics

Now is the time to commit to heart Anderson's First Law of Shoplifting: NEVER POCKET OR CONCEAL AN ITEM NEAR ITS SHELF LOCATION. If you plan to shoplift a steak, for example, put the steak in your cart and keep it there until you're far away from the meat counter.

Any security personnel will watch the meat display for meat thieves. If you place the steak in your cart, you'll look innocent. Go to an aisle with tough-to-shoplift stuff, like paper towels and toilet paper. Then conceal the steak; no one will be expecting you to do it there.

This brings us to Anderson's Second Law of Shoplifting: NEVER STEAL THE PACKAGE IF ITS CONTENTS CAN BE STOLEN. This applies primarily to the HBAs, as the health and beauty aids aisle is called.

For example, let's say you want to steal a 100-tablet bottle of Advil. Put the Advil, in its box, in your cart and move to another aisle (in accordance with Anderson's First Law, of course). Then pull the bottle out of the box, conceal the bottle and discard the box. If you're caught and searched, no one can prove the Advil came from that store. You can claim you always carry Advil because you get migraine headaches.

Finally, let's consider Anderson's Third Law of Shoplifting: NEVER SHOPLIFT ANYTHING YOU CANT AFFORD TO BUY. This lends credibility to your claim that you intended to pay for the item, but simply forgot. In addition, some stores don't want to bother with too many minor shoplifting cases. They may let you off if you pay for what you took.

Dress for Success

Where should you hide your booty? The answer depends on your physical build, your gender, what you're stealing, and, most importantly, the weather.

The weather? Yes, indeed. Large outer garments are ideal for concealing what you've stolen. But if the weather is warm and dry, a big coat will have the security people watching your every move.

That's no exaggeration. On a nice day, there's almost always some clown who comes into my store dressed for backpacking in Alaska. I immediately assume he's a thief and make no attempt to be subtle about following him around. I'll follow his every step in the store, including a visit to the bathroom.

If I don't see him steal anything, but I'm still suspicious, I'll "bump-frisk" him. That is, I'll "accidentally" bump into him and, while apologizing for my clumsiness, pat my hands up and down both sides of his coat, especially the pockets. If I find something, he's going to jail.

The good shoplifter dresses for his trade, but never wears clothing obviously unsuited for the current weather. A coat in summer might as well be a neon sign reading "I'm shoplifting."

If the weather's cool, you can wear a coat to which you've added large interior pockets. An enormous amount of merchandise can be taken this way, and you're relatively unlikely to be spotted, provided the coat's exterior looks normal. In this case, it helps to be fat. No one wants to embarrass an overweight person with questions about lumpy clothing.

In warm weather, it's a bit trickier. One common technique is to dress casually, with your shirt tail hanging out. Wide flat items, such as wrapped cuts of steak, can be concealed in your pants waistline.

Carry the steak to another aisle (Law No. 1), quickly lift your shirt tail, suck in your belly, and stuff the steak down the front of your pants. Let your shirt tail fall naturally back into place. With practice, the whole thing can be done in less than a second, and the shirt tail hides any telltale bumps.

If you're a woman, carry a large purse. But don't carry a huge purse. Really oversized purses attract unwanted attention just as effectively as a down parka in July.

The primary advantage of purses is that women normally carry certain items in their purses, and the presence of such items proves nothing, provided the outer containers have been removed (See Law No. 2). Be sure to leave your purse slightly open while shopping. A purse that's constantly being opened and closed will draw attention. Lipstick, cold medicine, aspirin and the like can safely be placed in your purse, even if you're searched.

Searches

And being female, by the way, makes it much less likely you'll be searched. That's because most security guards and store managers are male. It's no secret in the security business that women routinely claim they were sexually fondled during a search. No man wants to be accused of something that embarrassing, no matter how ludicrous the charge.

If you're a woman and a man does search you, by all means accuse him of fondling you. Scream loudly, so others in the store can hear you, "Get your hands off my breasts, you pervert!" or "Get your fingers away from there, I'm having my period!"

It doesn't matter how careful he is to avoid your private parts, he won't want to deal with your accusations. If you act sufficiently indignant, you're unlikely to be charged, even if they find stolen merchandise.

Cigarettes

Probably the most common target of shoplifters is cigarettes. If you smoke, you should never have to buy another pack in your life.

The reason, of course, is that virtually all male smokers carry a pack or two in the breast pocket of their shirts, and female smokers carry a couple in their purses. As long as no one sees the pack go from shopping cart to shirt pocket, nothing can be proved.

Be aware, however, that in a few states different stores affix different colored tax stamps on the packs.

If your pack can be traced to the store you're shopping in, don't claim you bought it at the gas station around the corner. Say you bought it in this store, sometime yesterday.

The pack of smokes can simply be dropped into your pocket or purse, as discussed above. Again, keep Anderson's First Law in mind: Never move the cigarettes from the display directly into your purse or pocket. Wait until you're in another aisle. In the unlikely event you get caught, claim that you stuck them in your pocket or purse out of habit, and meant to pay for them. The explanation is sufficiently plausible to get you off, even if you have to go to trial.

But don't get greedy. The only cigarette thieves I've caught who were subsequently convicted in court were people who tried to steal several packs. Anything beyond two packs is likely to get you in trouble.

Using the Restroom

Any store that permits shoppers more or less free access to the restrooms is an easy mark. You can carry a small basket of merchandise into the restroom, lock yourself in a stall, then transfer some of the loot into pockets or purse.

Some items can be consumed on the spot. I frequently find candy wrappers and empty beer cans in the restrooms. Furthermore, access to the bathrooms also may mean easy access to the back stockrooms, where no one is likely to be watching you. It never hurts to ask a store employee if you may use their restroom. If the answer is yes, make frequent use of it.

Carrying a Container

Another tactic worth considering is carrying an innocent-looking container to hold small shoplifted items. Some stores won't let you carry packages inside, and the package may serve only to draw unwanted observation.

But it sometimes works. My store, for example, is next door to a videotape rental shop. Our patrons routinely carry the boxes into the grocery store. If the movie cassette has already been removed, the box is big enough to carry a few small items out of the store.

Using a Confederate

Should you and a friend shoplift as a team? It depends. Using a confederate makes some techniques easier, but may also draw unwanted attention.

The best approach to "tag-team" shoplifting is to pretend to be shopping separately, using separate grocery carts. One of you is the "nest-builder," the other is the pick-up man. If done properly, this tactic is very hard to detect.

The term "nest" is security slang for a collection of items to be picked up and shoplifted at a later time. It is a natural extension of Anderson's First Rule of Shoplifting. Here's how it works:

You and your buddy agree in advance where the nest will be planted. Ideally, it should be in an aisle that is not easily observed and which contains bulky, rarely-shoplifted merchandise (pet food, paper goods,

etc.). You move through the store putting items in your cart, including small valuable items you intend to steal.

Steer your cart to the pre-arranged site and build your nest. Then hide it from casual shoppers by placing an article from that aisle's stock in front of the nest. Continue through the store and purchase a few cheap articles.

Ten minutes later, your partner, who didn't put any easily-shoplifted items in his cart, and therefore has attracted no attention to himself, arrives at the nest site. He pockets the contents of the nest and leaves. He may want to purchase a few small items on the way out. If the nest site is sufficiently hidden from casual view, this is a very tough tactic to beat.

The nest-building technique can, of course, be used by one person alone. Hide the merchandise now, return an hour later to pick it up. It's safer than more blatant forms of shoplifting, but still more risky than working with a friend. When a person routinely pays more than one visit a day to my store, I get suspicious.

A Final Word

A final word about shoplifting: If you think you've been spotted, or that a security guard may be following you, dump your loot. Most stores won't prosecute anyone who doesn't actually carry the merchandise out of the store. Merely concealing or moving merchandise inside the store may legally constitute shoplifting, but prosecution is unlikely if you ditch the evidence.

Chapter 7

Don't Look Like a Shoplifter

The security people can't watch everyone, so they keep an eye on shoppers who look suspicious. Your goal, as a professional food thief, is to look as little like a shoplifter as possible. Let's look at who catches my eye.

Groups of People

Normal folks shop alone, or with a spouse. Nothing gets my attention faster than a group of four or five people, especially if they're all young or of the same sex.

Peer pressure is a very real thing, especially among teenagers. I know plenty of regular shoppers who cause no problem when alone, but become so obnoxious in the presence of their peers that I'm frequently forced to throw them out.

Additionally, it's a fairly common shoplifting technique to form a huddle of people around the one concealing the merchandise. This generally works, since I'm not going to challenge someone unless I'm absolutely certain he's carrying. But in the long run, it's a lousy technique. I may not catch you today, but I know you're a thief and I'll get you eventually. Shoplift alone or in the company of someone who can pass as your spouse.

Race

It's an unfortunate fact that I catch a disproportionate number of black shoplifters, despite trying to keep an eye on suspicious people of all colors. This may be a result of the neighborhoods my store serves. The store stands exactly between a black neighborhood with an epidemic of drug and alcohol trouble, and a fairly affluent, mostly white neighborhood.

There's nothing you can do about your skin color, of course. But you can pick your store with an eye to blending in. If you're white, shoplift in a store patronized primarily by whites. If you're black, hispanic or whatever, shoplift in a store whose clientele most resembles you.

Attitude

If you've obviously got a chip on your shoulder, don't blame me if I follow your every step. I make a point of giving a pleasant "Hi, how are you?" to every customer we serve. If the response is a nose in the air, I get pissed off. You don't want to piss off the guard.

Again, there is a racial angle to this. Let me say that I'm no racist. If I were young and black, I'd be just as angry and just as contemptuous of white men in cop uniforms as many of my shoppers seem to be. But if I were shoplifting, I wouldn't advertise my feelings.

When a young, tough-looking black guy strolls into the store, wearing his Malcolm X baseball cap and Oakland Raiders windbreaker, he gets my attention. If he wants to really catch my eye, he'll wear sunglasses and stereo headphones playing rap music audible halfway across the store. Refusing to speak in response to my pleasant small-talk ices it. The guy is going to get followed.

He's trying to intimidate me, of course, but it's pathetic. After all, I'm carrying a nightstick, Mace, handcuffs and a gun, and I'm licensed to use all of them. Does he really think I'm scared of him?

I don't care what your racial or political views are. Your tough-guy routine is counterproductive to successful shoplifting.

Tattoos

If you have conspicuous tattoos, that tells me that at least once in your life you got drunk and did something stupid on impulse. You may do it again, and I may catch you. Wear long sleeves.

Age

Younger folks are more likely to steal than older folks. If you're a kid, you can't change your birthday, but you can make an attempt to dress and behave in a manner that makes you seem older.

Sex

It's no secret that teenage girls -- even girls from affluent families -- like to shoplift for thrills. However, they usually do it in the presence of their peers. A woman alone or with a man won't get my attention, but a man alone might.

Attire

Dress conservatively. As mentioned before, don't wear an outfit that looks like it was designed for shoplifting. That means no clothing that's

too heavy for the weather. Frankly, I won't look twice at a well-behaved man wearing a necktie. That should suggest a useful dress-for-success tip.

Also, avoid T-shirts with anti-social or obscene messages. Yeah, I know. You've got your First Amendment rights and all that. But there's no Constitutional right to shoplift, so you'd do better wearing clothing that won't draw attention.

Accessories

Because of the nature of my job, I tend to see most accessories as potential hiding places (briefcases, large purses) or weapons (walking sticks carried by able-bodied shoppers).

But there's one accessory I recommend to all serious shoplifters: a shopping list. Most normal people plan their trips to the store and prepare a list. Amateur shoplifters usually act on impulse with no pre-planning. If you regularly consult a shopping list while in my store, I'm likely to consider you honest and harmless. Carry a list.

Behavior

If you act (or smell) drunk, I'll consider you suspicious. Lots of people will do things while drunk they'd lack the nerve to do sober. If you're extremely drunk, I'll simply arrest you for being drunk.

The same goes for snotty remarks or loud cursing. These things don't mean you're a shoplifter, of course, but they sure as hell make me want to catch you if you are. Be pleasant and quiet, even if it means biting your tongue.

Finally, don't keep looking around. This may be the hardest thing for a budding young shoplifter to master, but it's worth it. If you look over both shoulders every time you make a move, I'm going to start wondering what you're scared of.

If you don't look over both shoulders, you might shoplift something in the presence of a guard or store employee. But odds are, you weren't really being watched. Try to look comfortable and relaxed, no matter what crime you're perpetrating. If you really do get caught concealing something, you can always ditch it in the next aisle. Relax and radiate confidence, even if you have to fake it.

Chapter 8

Supermarket Security

All supermarkets experience some shoplifting, so you need to be aware of the security measures they employ.

Security Personnel

I'm an example of the most obvious: an armed uniformed guard. Believe it or not, this may be a good sign. The presence of a uniformed security man suggests there's probably no plainclothes floorwalker. Most supermarkets are too cheap to employ both.

Furthermore, a guy in uniform is very easy to keep track of, especially if you're using a confederate as a lookout. And the man in the cop suit

will probably ignore you if you don't look or act suspicious. It's important to remember that the uniformed guy's primary purpose is deterrence, not setting arrest records. That's the plainclothes guy's department.

As for the plainclothes man, you're unlikely to encounter one in most supermarkets. They just aren't used that often.

An easy way to find out if a store uses non-uniformed security is to offer your services in that capacity to the manager. He's likely to say either "No thanks, we don't use floorwalkers," or "No thanks, we've already got someone." Either way, you've obtained a bit of useful information.

Mirrors

Two kinds of mirrors are used for security purposes. The most obvious is the large, round, convex mirror that may be mounted in the corners of the store.

Their lens shape gives them a wide angle of vision, but at the expense of image size. Like the message on your car's right outside mirror says, "Objects Are Closer Than They Appear." In other words, you may be visible in the convex mirror, but you'll look so tiny it's impossible to make out what you're doing.

This type of mirror has another weakness. Simply put, if they can see you, you can see them. That's the nature of mirrors. If you glance into a mirror and find yourself looking directly into someone's eyes, you can be sure he is watching you.

The other type of mirror is the two-way, or front-silvered, mirror. When you look at the mirror, you see a reflection. But if someone is behind a two-way mirror, he sees you, not his own reflection.

Normal mirrors are sheets of glass silvered on the back. (Actually, nobody really uses silver anymore; the back of the mirror is more likely coated with aluminum or steel.)

Two-way mirrors are very lightly silvered on the front surface. The silvering is light enough to be reasonably transparent, provided the light in back is kept low.

To put it more simply, regular mirrors are silvered on the back side, security mirrors on the front. Therefore, with a regular mirror, you're looking through a sheet of glass at the reflected image. With a security mirror, the image is right there on the front.

There's a very easy way to tell the difference. Take a nail file, sharpened pencil, pen or other hard, sharp-edged item and touch the surface of the mirror. If you're using, say, a pencil, there should be a noticeable gap between the point of the pencil and the point of the reflected pencil's image. Typically, the gap will be between an eighth and a quarter of an inch.

If the pencil tip rests directly against the reflected image of the pencil's tip, you're probably being watched. If you must shoplift in a store with a two-way mirror, you'll have to assume you're always under observation from that mirror and shield your actions accordingly.

Cameras

Some stores use ceiling cameras. A sheet of Plexiglas in place of an acoustical tile may indicate the presence of cameras. More often, the cameras are housed in a clear bubble in the ceiling, or may simply be mounted on wall braces.

I'm going to let you in on a secret. Any camera you can see is probably fake. Real cameras are expensive; grocery store managers are cheap. And even if the cameras are real, who the hell is watching the monitors? Is your grocery store really willing to pay for all that equipment -- cameras, monitors, videotape recorders -- and then hire enough security people to watch them?

Some very realistic dummy cameras, some with a little red pilot light built in, are sold to grocery stores in large quantities. They're much cheaper than the real thing, and since they don't actually work, no one is needed to monitor them.

If you were a store manager, would you shell out the dough for the real thing? No, me either. I'd buy the dummies and hope to deter shoplifters.

If you're still uncomfortable in front of the cameras, there's an easy way to test them. Go through the motions of very obviously concealing an item right in front of the camera lens, then quickly leave that area.

Ditch the item you concealed and hang around for a while. If someone confronts you and requests permission to search you, the camera's real. If not, forget it.

(You should, by the way, refuse permission to be searched. This will force the security people to arrest you in order to search you. Since you dumped the loot, they'll find nothing. Threaten to sue them for false arrest. They may offer you a settlement. At the very least you'll make them nervous.)

Electronic Gates

Some supermarkets have begun to install electronic gates at their exit doors. They are similar to those currently used by clothing stores and libraries. A magnetized strip is placed on some merchandise which must be deactivated at a check-out, otherwise it will set off an alarm and, in some cases, lock the door if you pass through the detectors.

This system is very troublesome and very expensive. One of the biggest expenses is the labor of placing the magnetic strips on the merchandise. The system is difficult to defeat and I recommend avoiding stores so equipped.

But don't worry about these systems proliferating. Most supermarket managers are too cheap to install real cameras or two-way mirrors. How many are going to spring for the "Star Wars" system? Shoplift elsewhere.

Chapter 9

If You Get Caught...

What if you get caught? Deny everything. If that doesn't work, offer to pay (See Anderson's Third Rule of Shoplifting). If they arrest you anyway, be completely cooperative. Don't run. Shoplifting is a minor offense. Resisting arrest is a major offense. And the cops aren't going

to treat you in a particularly gentle manner if you force them to catch you.

If you have no previous record, you can probably make a deal whereby you plead guilty, do some community service, and the charge is expunged from your record after a year, provided you're not convicted of anything else in the interim.

If you do have some prior convictions, then you already know how the game is played. Make your best deal with the prosecutor and hope for the best.

But this is a worst-case scenario. People with police records shouldn't be shoplifting anyway.

My advice is good, or I wouldn't be offering it here. But it's still no guarantee you'll never get caught or arrested. You take that chance every time you break the law.

But my advice can minimize that risk. If I had to single out the one piece of advice I consider to be most useful for successful shoplifting, it would be this: Don't look the part.

No matter how much it stifles your own opinions, your own personal character or your own sense of style, don't look (or act) like a shoplifter. Try to look like a nerd, a guy (or gal) who listens to "Christian rock 'n' roll," and likes it.

Try to look like you'd be proud to have Pat Boone as your father. Try to look like you carried a bookbag to school, and keep track of your car's gasoline mileage. Carry your empty shopping bags back to the store for recycling, or better yet, provide your own reusable bags from Nerds "R" Us, or wherever.

Virtually every shoplifter I've seen has given himself away by refusing to blend in, to act in a non-threatening way. In other words, his own pride has given him away.

For all I know, the quiet, respectable-looking people may be stealing the store blind. And I never will know, because I don't watch them. They don't look like shoplifters, and they'll never get caught if they are.

Emulate those folks and eat for free. Just don't do it in my store, if you don't mind. Do we have a deal?

Back Cover:

GIVE YOUR BUDGET A BOOST!

We live in a wonderful country, where we get to pay taxes for farm subsidies so that we can be overcharged for food at the store. A country where people starve outside stores that sell gourmet diet dog food. A country where we can publish a book that tells you how to steal food from the supermarket.

Written by a supermarket security guard, How to Steal Food from the Supermarket will teach you how to purloin some sirloin, how to snatch a batch of cookies, how to poach eggs. Here's the real skinny on getting fat:

- Using coupons for stuff you didn't buy

- Do-it-yourself markdowns
- Dressing for shoplifting success
- Switching bar codes
- Scamming the Scanner
- Nest-building and other shoplifting techniques
- How to find out if the store uses plainclothes guards
- How to tell if mirrors are two-way
- What to do if you're caught
- And much more!

Did you know that most supermarket security cameras are fake? Do you know the one mistake that trips up most shoplifters? Do you know the one item you should always carry with you when shoplifting?

You'll find the answers to these questions, and dozens of other clever ideas, inside this amazing little manual.

Get your copy today.

This offer not available in stores.

A Guide to Shoplifting!

DISCLAIMER:

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A GUIDE TO SHOPLIFTING

Since I started working at a grocery store, I have learned many techniques to shoplifting. I have learned some stuff by the mistakes made by several shoplifters, and others by experiment.

RULE 1 : NEVER NEVER NEVER try to steal something at a store you frequently shop at. That is just plain stupid. If you really want something bad enough, then spend a little gas money. Hey, its better than buying the product you are about to lift.

RULE 2 : Don't act suspicious or nervous. Employees aren't stupid. They know that if you are acting nervous, then you are usually up to something bad.

RULE 3 : Try to steal from stores without video survaliance. This is by far the safest way to do things.

RULE 4 : DO NOT be GREEDY! Take a little at a time. And take

things that will fit in your pocket or purse. Bigger items are harder to get away with.

RULE 5 : Try not to hit the same stores over and over. Have some variety in your life. You will be less likely to be caught if you don't frequently go to the same place.

RULE 6 : Do NOT be fooled by cameras with the name SVS. These are fakes! They do nothing but sit there. They look real by the way they have a cable going into a wall, and are plugged in and have a red light on, but they are still fake. GUARANTEED!

RULE 7 : Do NOT be stupid enough to steal around other shoppers. I have seen many instances where the employees never saw a person shoplift, but a customer had turned a shoplifter in, and the customers word is just as incriminating as the employees.

RULE 8 : Many times if someone sees you trying to shoplift, they will start following you around. Calmly place the stuff back on the shelf, any shelf! They really can't get you as long as you haven't walked by a register, and start walking out the door, because until you start walking out the door, you still could have intent to pay, and if they do pick you up for shoplifting before you walk out the door, your case most likely will not hold up in court. Many

lawyers have freed many shoplifters because of that. If they pick you up. Start telling them you haven't had a chance to pay, and that they can not pick you up for shoplifting, until you have a chance to pay, or walk out the door! Just act like you know what you are talking about!

RULE 9 : When you start walking out the door and you see someone following you, then run for dear life. Most of the time you can get away. If you have a get-a-way car waiting, then be sure that the license plate is covered up. All it takes is for someone to write down the license plate number to get you caught.

RULE 10 : If by any chance you are caught trying to flee, try and wrestle your way out, but BE CAREFUL! Do not injure the person who is trying to catch you, let alone threaten them. If you just so happen to scratch them, the penalty goes from theft to Assult and Robery, which means a bigger fine, or more time!

RULE 11 : Have someone waiting with bail money in case you get caught. *8-)

Now on to some ways to shoplift.

Method 1 :

This is probably the easiest method. Get a friend of yours to go to a store with you. Have him/her act very very suspicous. When an employee sees someone acting suspicous the key in on that person. Soon they will have everyone in that store watching him/her. Then you go where ever the merchandise is, and steal away. You leave with whatever you wanted, and then your friend leaves soon after, feeling good that he/she has just fooled a store full of idiots.

Method 2 :

If you are a woman, then get a big purse. Empty it out, and pick the lucky victim. This works good at places with shopping carts. Place your purse in the section where children sit. Usually located at the front of the basket. Have your purse open at this point. Go around the store looking at whatever you like. When you find the item, pick it up, look at it, and casually sit it down like you are putting it in the basket, but instead of putting it in the basket, put it in your purse.

Method 3 :

Grocery stores are probably the easiest to hit. Most have low security if any. Only problem, is that most people think the only thing you can get at a grocery store is food. WRONG!! Go over to the more expensive area, HBA (Health & Beauty Aids). There is gold there. Get everything from Advil to Obsession Cologne. You ask yourself, why do i need 80 boxes of Advil? Take one box for yourself, then go sell the rest to friends, or take the stuff to a Flea Market, set yourself

up a booth, and sell away. Most boxes of Advil cost around $8-$10 each. You sell for $5, and instant profit. But be careful in the HBA area, that is usually where the security will be, if any!. I have seen many stores, with out any cameras in the grocery area, but one camera in the ceiling in the HBA area. So just pick up the stuff, put it in the basket, carry it over to the grocery side, and take it! Another good thing to take from grocery stores is cigarettes. A carton is getting close to $20 each. So take yourself a few, and sell to your friends/family for about $10-$15. Good profit there. Or if you are into that nasty habit, keep them for yourself.

Method 4 :

Whenever you need to get film developed, or prescriptions filled, then take it to your favorite grocery store. After you get your prescription and/or film, tell the clerk that you are going to do some more shopping. Walk around the store a little, then walk out the door. A good idea is to have a receipt from an old purchase. carry it in one hand, then carry the goods in the other. That way the look at you, see the receipt, and think that you payed for it.

Method 5 :

A good way to get free fertilizer, top soil, etc., is to go by your favorite nursery or whoever carries the stuff outside. Give them a visit about 3 a.m. or so, and fill up your truck or car. The best way to do this is to have someone driving, while you fill it up. If someone comes out of the store (like a night stocker) and confronts you, jump in

the back of the truck, and tell your friend to take off. Be sure to have

you license plate covered up.

CONCLUSION :

Stores today are not there for you. They are there for themselves.

They may claim low prices, but in all truth the merchandise is usually marked

up 200% or more. I have seen some instances where cologne has been marked

up 450%. This is outrageous. Why should we pay those kind of prices, when

we can get it for free! Many stores may claim that shoplifting increases

prices, although the real reasons for price increases is the Upper Division,

who wants more added onto their 6 and 7 digit yearly salaries. So don't

be fooled by that stupid warning. And remember Robin Hood, steal from the

rich (THEM) and give to the poor (YOU, even if you aren't poor heh!).

The Art of Shoplifting

Shoplifting is a topic that is practically relevant to many and it should therefore not become an exclusive craft confined to a small shoplifting elite. On the contrary, shoplifting is an art that deserves the widest possible dissemination. For your convenience we have printed below a step by step guide to shoplifting. Good luck.

Within capitalism, most of us are either (1) alienated from our labour and hence dependent on the ruling classes for commodities as basic as food and clothing, (2) excluded from the division of labour, in which case we are likewise dependant on the State, or (3) performing unpaid and/or unrecognised labour and hence dependant on patriarchal relations for food, clothing, etcetera. In any case, our access to resources is severely limited by contemporary relations of domination. One partial solution to this problem may be to STEAL.

Sadly, however, many people living precariously on low incomes tend to either: (1) avoid shoplifting for anachronistic moral and/or ethical reasons; or (2) remain ignorant of the better methods and techniques of shoplifting, thus failing to maximise their lifting potential.

From the onset, the golden rule of theft should be enunciated: NEVER STEAL FROM SOMEBODY WHO COULD CONCEIVABLY BE A COMRADE. Hence kicking into a house on Bell Street with a beaten up old Mazda in the yard is irresponsible and counter-revolutionary!

Be careful, too, about taking stuff from small 'corner store' type shops -- you could be ripping off someone in a situation not dissimilar to your own. On the whole, it is best to play it safe and go straight for the big corporate fuckers.

Some people will suggest that shoplifters are a selfish breed, since 'we all pay for it in the end' through inflated prices to cover losses and so forth. However, comrades, this and closely analogous arguments are used to just ify lowering wages, breaking unions, lowering corporate taxation and taxation on the rich and corporate sector we may as well sell ourselves into bonded slavery now, or join the Liberal Party.

No, the injunction against stealing from capitalism is itself a capitalist ideology and should be spurned as such. Although we have been taught that 'thou shalt not steal', an order historically backed by threats of divine retribution, this should not for one minute stop us from taking the redistribution of wealth into our own hands. Believe me, no-one is likely to do it for us.

What follows is a list of effective methods and observations that may prove useful.

Preparing oneself for the big haul:

1. If possible, you should always have some money on you when intending to shoplift, because if you've got none, it's rather hard to argue that to steal the item was a spontaneous decision. As a result, if you've got no money and are caught shoplifting you are more than likely to be charged for burglary as well as theft.

2. Buying something at the same time that you steal stuff doesn't necessarily ensure success. Approaching staff for items you are absolutely sure they don't have is just as good. Think of something that you know they don't have (i.e. a doona cover with a specific pattern on it or something equally obscure) and pretend that you are looking for this, so that you have an excuse for being there. If staff are ever suspicious of you or ask if they can help you, ask them if they've got the thing you are sure they don't have. Never screw this up -- if you do you will have to buy the item or they may realise that you are there to steal.

3. It is always a good idea to carry a bag although you should never stash anything in it -- if security/sales staff are suss on you the first place that they'll check is your bag and it may just get you off the hook if they can't find anything suspicious inside of it.

4. Remember that there is no such thing as a standard store detective -- there is no qualifying dress code, age, race, gender or class. Grandma will bust you this week and next week it'll be a 5 year old kid.

5. Just as there is no typical store detective nor is there a standard shoplifter. Security do not go looking for the poorly dressed people. They may pick on you out of boredom, but remember, only an unsuccessful store detective picks on poorly dressed people. By the same token don't believe the stale myth that suits + dresses = more successes; security anticipate that professional shoplifters will dress up a bit. Wear whatever you want.

On entering the maze:

1. As soon as you enter the store, suss out the sales people. First impressions often count here. You could find a valuable blind-eye turning ally in younger or less-affluent employees. Alternatively, an employee can often stand out as a more wishy-washy gullible individual -- so even if they see you they are likely to be too gutless to mention it, either to you or to security.

2. Don't be put off by signs such as 'shoplifters will be prosecuted' or 'security police patrol this store'. Often this is just bluff anyway, and in any case there is no security measure that cannot be undone by a clever shoplifter or a quick talker. Do, however, keep your eye on security and be on the lookout for video surveillance cameras.

3. Try to find where the video surveillance monitors are and who is watching them; often they are not even looking at them. See if you can get a glance at their monitor. Often it is one monitor hooked up to 20 cameras which changes sequentially (every 30 seconds or so). Other times it's one guy in a room looking at 50 screens while reading the paper or glued to the box. These monitors are usually pretty small and have a wide aperture, showing more of the room but not enough detail to adequately see what you are up to.

4. It is a good idea to keep your back to the camera as much as possible without looking suspicious. Check out cameras (hold-up cameras) are often set up to check on employees, so they are not hard to keep your back turned to.

Blind-spots and other lifting techniques:

1. A blind-spot is a section of the store where you are barely visible and can thus feel free to both dump and collect stuff, without fear of being seen. Display units can make perfect blind-spots -- they ensure security is confident they have their eye on you, when in fact they can only see your top half -- at the same time they enable you to keep your eye on security. For these reasons, the best blind-spots are usually below the chest -- around waist high. Blind-spots are good for loading into the lip of your jeans or into a jacket.

2. Make sure your blind-spot is not under surveillance. Never hang around your blind-spot for too long. Most of all, be careful to never lead security to your blind-spot.

3. A good method is to take everything you want to your blind-spot and collect it all later in one go, or better still get someone else to collect it for you. Getting someone else to collect for you can be a great system, particularly with exchanges -- which I'll come to later. If you are really pedantic, or you think that they are watching you, then load up, go to the toilets and pass the stuff under the wall/partition of the cubicle to a waiting friend in an adjoining cubicle and get them to leave with it.

(No item 4 in original text -- ed.)

5. Speaking of dunnies and change-rooms, one of the oldest tricks in the book is to put more than one garment on a hanger (works particularly well with women's underwear), go to the change-rooms and put the garment underneath what you are wearing. Alternatively, if you are a woman, you can slip your old bra on a hanger and put on the new one. Don't be put off by the staff as you enter the change-rooms -- they are usually quite disinterested and so long as the number of hangers you exit with matches the little plastic number they've given you they'll be satisfied.

6. On the subject of women's underwear, the lingerie department is ideally suited to male shoplifters -- not only is it the perfect excuse for looking embarrassed or suspicious (they have come to expect this), but staff are less likely to harass you by trying to help you and will be more sympathetic generally.

Exchanging crap for more crap

Exchanging things -- that is, taking the redistribution of wealth into your own hands by refunding yourself for an item you never paid for, or swapping something you stole that you don't want for something you do want, or swapping something that you don't want that is unstealable and therefore refundable -- is a whole new ball game.

1. If you plan to steal something and then make an exchange always take stuff that people are likely to take back like sheets, or other obscure household items. If questioned you can say to them "as if I'm gonna keep the receipt, I didn't plan to bring it back". Books and other small but expensive items such as computer software are also great exchangeables.

2. Stealing women's underwear and cosmetics are the perfect alibi for male shoplifters who specialise in exchanges. Male customers always fuck up buying stuff for their girlfriends/wives/mothers and when it comes to lingerie, it's just too easy for a guy to look goofy, have sales staff sympathise and all too quickly agree to exchange or refund the items. This works particularly well around Xmas time when you can tell them you bought it for your mother but she already had that one.

3. Never take an exchange item to the store you stole it from and make sure the other store (e.g. Myers in Doncaster as opposed to Northland) has the same item before you take it back.

4. Make sure you have chosen your item before you approach anyone for an exchange. Also, tell the people in the first department that you want an exchange without mentioning receipts -- they should send you down to the appropriate department for your other item and then ring up this department providing a referral, which if you are lucky will mean you do not have to provide a receipt given that everything appears legitimate.

5. The first time you exchange a stolen item for another product make sure you get something unstealable in return, like a video, watch, or something else kept behind a counter, so that the second time you do it, even if you don't get an exchange receipt they will not suspect that it is stolen.

6. Exchange receipts are a pain in the arse. Sometimes smart arse sales people will write a cross the original docket 'no original receipt' which is a problem, so if you have a bit of money on you, it is a good idea to exchange for something that costs a little bit more so that they have to give you a cash receipt.

7. Don't freak out if they call security while you are acting out an exchange -- as returns will often require security's signature this is quite standard procedure and nothing to worry about.

8. If you're having problems getting an exchange, big department stores normally have consumer rights people located upstairs somewhere -- they can usually be contacted by information telephones. These are people with big egos who like to wield power and the sales staff, who are much lower down the hierarchy, are usually pretty freaked out by this power. If you do get the ego from upstairs on side, they will organise a sales person to look after you and after the egomaniac goes up upstairs again, they sure will -- because the sales person does not want to reprimanded by the same person from upstairs more than once, you will be practically able to get them to do anything that you want them to. A good technique is to tell the person upstairs a different story to the one that you tell the sales person. You can get angry at this stage and tell them that they fucked you around, that you don't want an exchange any more and that you want a refund now and they will usually comply.

9. Be wary of the long term employee -- you've got to know when to stop. Be particularly wary of the head of sales or middle management who have been working there for a long time (sometimes 20 years or more) and are not as scared of the big guys from upstairs as are the newer employees. You can often convince some of the younger staff that they are allowed to do refunds if you tell them that you used to work there.

10. Another commonly used technique is to take an empty bag from the same store with a receipt in it for previously paid for items and then nick the same stuff, which gives you the perfect alibi.

11. Better still, if you've got some money, find two things that are worth however much you've got, take them out of the store and stash them somewhere, then go back in and buy the exact same items. While leaving the checkout, make a big deal about it. "Am I doing the right thing? Will she like it? Will it fit him? etcetera" and then "what the heck!" (Make sure you don't go overboard and push them to mention keeping the receipt or worst of all mention it yourself!) Pay for it. About half an hour to a couple of hours later (not too long) take the stuff back to the same sales people and they'll usually give you cash without a receipt because they remember selling it to you. If you pull it off you've got a cash receipt and your stolen goods which you can exchange at another store.

Leaving the store safely:

1. Always double back just as you are about to leave the store so that you can check if anyone is following you (99.9% of the time they will follow you out of the store before they approach you). Alternatively, go up and down an escalator or in a lift and press every button in the lift and it will be obvious if anyone is following you.

2. If people are watching you, whatever you do, do not try to discreetly dump stuff unless you are absolutely sure that you can get away with it. If caught dumping stuff they usually won't charge you but they may fuck you around for a few hours.

3. If you are caught dumping stuff never let a store detective know it was because of them. Always make out it was a result of a sudden guilty conscience. Never let a store detective know that you know that they are on to you, because they won't put them on you the next time. That way you get to know store security and are able to keep your eye on them as much as you can.

4. If you want to have a bit of fun and don't plan to continue shoplifting that day, or ever, or you just don't give a shit, go up to a store detective and treat them like a sales person, asking them for help etcetera. It is just as embarrassing for them to be caught as it is for you. It is always a good thing to break their spirits or at least bring them down every now and again. Alternatively, use reverse psychology on them. Say "I'm going down to

such and such department. I'll see you down there". Often they'll be too embarrassed that they've been busted and think that you won't do it now that you're being watched and you will have the run of the mill.

5.NEVER GET TOO CONFIDENT or you will start to make silly mistakes.

The end:

Finally, if you get caught -- lie your teeth out! Never admit to premeditation. Always say that the opportunity arose, so you took it. Don't act tough or be a smart arse. Cry. Bawl. Admit a guilty conscience. Beg them not to call the cops. Tell them that CSV will take your kids off you and then weep.

Even though some stores say they have a policy to call the police it is not necessarily true and they may, after lots of tears and admissions of guilt, just get you to sign a statement which says you'll never enter that store again. If the cops do arrive, it's a good idea to act scared shitless because they may assume you're a first offender and not bother to check your record. Don't antagonise the filth -- it is their personal discretion as to how bad you get busted.

You are most likely to be charged with 'theft' if caught shoplifting, but you can be charged with 'burglary' as well if you don't have any money on you. 'Equipped to steal' is what you will be charged with if, for example, you have a slit in the lining of your jacket for concealing stolen goods. 'Obtaining financial advantage' and 'deception' are what you are likely to be charged with as well as 'theft', if caught exchanging stolen items.

Shoplifting Prevention Tips

SHOPLIFTING FACTS AND PREVENTION

Did you know? Theft of a $2.00 item from a store operating on a 10% profit margin requires the sale of $20.00 in merchandise to make up the loss. Supermarkets and others operating on low margins of 1% must sell $300.00 in merchandise, just to cover the theft of a $3.00 item.

WHO ARE SHOPLIFTERS?

General shoplifters are solid citizens who are bored or need to stretch their budgets.

Professional shoplifters are skilled thieves who have specialized techniques. The pro is the hardest to deter and most difficult to detect. The professionals usually target expensive items.

Youth make up nearly half of all shoplifters. Many do it just for kicks. Some even shoplift in gangs and compete to see who can steal the most.

Drug Addictions issues are the driving force to shoplift to support an expensive habit. These individuals are often desperate.

Kleptomaniacs are persons who steal because of psychological compulsion. Stopping the kleptomaniac is a service to both the offender and the community.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

Greet customers as they enter the store. Attention is good for business and bad for the shoplifter.

Watch customers' behaviours. Are they watching you? Are they trying to distract you by asking about the product, to look in the back room, for a tissue, to use the bathroom, to call another store, etc? Darting eyes and nervous hands are frequent clues.

Be on the lookout for people carrying large purses or shopping bags or who wear unusually bulky clothing. Big open purses and bags that appear to be fairly empty are one of the biggest red flags to look for. After all, your shoplifter needs a place to conceal the items. Pay attention to the condition of the bag and the store name on the bag. For example if he/she is carrying a really beat up bag, know that it might have been used or reused in attempts to shoplift because most retailers will not just give away their crisp clean bags without a purchase being made. Due to the Go Green movement, many bring their own bags with them to put their purchases in.

Be wary of distracting situations. Pros often work in pairs—one distracts the employee, while the other shoplifts.

Is your customer shopping alone? Shoplifters will obviously shop together, distract and shoplift or they will arrive at different times as though they don't know each other, but in reality they are partners in crime.

Are there children involved? Is your customer distracting you while the child shoplifts or are you distracted by the child who could afford the customer time to shoplift?

Beware of the customers that might switch price tags on clothing in order to get them cheaper.

SHOPLIFTING TECHNIQUES

Hiding the Merchandise

A large open bag is a common shoplifter tool. It's placed at the thief's feet, and objects are casually dropped into it. Keep an eye out for shopping bags that are not from local stores. Preventing this is why many stores staple bags shut. Other stores require customers to leave their bags by the front door when they come in.

Women sometimes use purses to hide stolen items. There is little you can do to stop women from carrying purses and handbags.

The best prevention in these cases is to watch the customers very carefully.

The baby carriage or stroller is a great tool for shoplifters. There are always blankets, toys, and other things in strollers (including the baby) that merchandise can be hidden under. Some thieves have even built false bottoms in baby carriages.

A newspaper can be used to hide small objects.

Umbrellas with handles are handy for shoplifters trying to steal small items. A common tactic is to keep a closed (but not snapped) umbrella hanging on one's elbow or leaning against a counter, and then to drop items into it.

Shoplifter's Clothing

"Crotch-walking" is a technique used by women wearing full skirts and dresses. They simply place the merchandise between their thighs and walk away. Thieves who are good at this have been known to steal hams, typewriters, and other large objects.

Baggy clothes in general are good places to hide stolen items. Some people have extra pockets or hooks sewn into coats and jackets. Beware of the customer with a large coat who keeps his hand in a coat pocket. Some shoplifters have cut slits in the pocket lining, so they can reach for items without being seen. They may make a big deal out of inspecting an item while the other hand slips out and grabs something.

Some shoplifters are more daring.

Some shoplifters just grab stuff and walk out with it. They rely on the gullibility and slow response time of sales clerks.

Some shoplifters grab garments from racks close to the door and run off. This can be prevented very easily by alternating the directions of hangers. This makes the hangers "lock up" when someone tries to remove many at once.

The really brazen thieves simply walk out with large items that are not ordinarily put in bags. Prevent this by making it unusual for legitimate customers to carry out their large purchases, with a policy that all large items must be picked up at a location physically separate from the sale floor, or that employees take all large items out to customer's cars. Or you could put big bright stickers on purchased large items. This at least makes it easily for employees to tell if the merchandise is being stolen.

A common technique, especially if your fitting rooms aren't well monitored, is for the thief to steal garments by putting them on under her own clothes and wearing them out of the store. Others will just put the clothing on and walk out. It's difficult to catch one of these people, because if they haven't concealed the item, they technically haven't stolen it until they exit the store without paying.

Most shoplifters can't succeed unless they get some privacy. This is why one of the best ways to stop shoplifting is to greet customers as soon as they walk in, then be attentive to them the rest of the time. But skilled shoplifters can distract sales associates using the following tricks:

They enter the store in groups then separate which makes it difficult for employees to watch all of them.

A pair of shoppers comes in, and while one distracts you with questions, the other steals.

A single shopper sends the only employee in the store into the back room to find something, and then steals stuff and leaves before the employee comes back.

ACT NOW!

Most importantly, once you suspect you have a shoplifter on your hands, you must provide the best customer service ever, and fast.

This is the best way to deter shoplifting. Build a connection with the customer and exchange names. Once you have a name, whether it's real name or not, the shoplifters are less likely to shoplift from you because they know you are on top of your business.

Prevention methods to undertake if possible:

Install convex mirrors, closed circuit TV cameras or security officers.

Train your personnel to spot shoplifters and make sure they are vigilant.

Pay particular attention to fitting rooms and other isolated areas.

Try to arrange your counters and displays in a way to deter shoplifters.

Put displays in full view of all employees.

Lock anything small that can be easily slipped into a pocket or handbag, in counter cases when possible.

Keep expensive items away from entrances.

Most people employed in a retail environment are faced with shoplifting incidents on a regular, if not frequent basis. Unfortunately though, most do not know exactly how they should handle the situation.

From a legal point of view, if you interdict the shoplifter and detain that person for the police, you are in effect making an arrest.

Therefore, it is important that you know what your legal authority is:

Section 494 of the Criminal Code of Canada specifically states where your authority comes from.

Anyone may arrest without warrant

a) a person whom he finds committing an indictable offence; or

b) a person who, on reasonable and probable grounds, he believes

i) has committed a criminal offence AND

ii) is escaping from and freshly pursued by person(s) who have lawful authority to arrest that person.

Anyone who is the owner or a person in lawful possession of property; or a person authorized by the owner or by a person in lawful possession of property, may arrest without warrant a person whom he finds committing a criminal offence on or in relation to that property.

Anyone other than a peace officer who arrests a person without warrant shall forthwith deliver that person to a peace officer.

As noted in subsection 2, the operative phrase is finds committing. You must actually see the offence take place. If someone tells you what occurred, you do not have the legal authority to detain that person for the police.

If you do see someone take some property from your store, the offence has to be complete. That means the shoplifter must be given every opportunity to legitimately purchase whatever item is in their possession.

Therefore the shoplifter must actually leave the store for the theft to be complete. Once outside, if you are absolutely certain the person took something, you should tell someone in your store what you are going to do, then approach the offender and identify yourself as the store owner or employee. Say something to the effect of, "I observed you take (item) from the store without paying for it (them). Come with me. I'm going to notify the police."

In most cases, the offender will do as you request. Escort the individual back to your office or other quiet area. Ensure the item(s) in their possession do not get discarded on the way there. You can look very foolish if

this happens. Do not engage in searching the individual. Once in the office, ask for the property back. If the thief refuses, that's fine. Just ensure they remain seated with their hands in your view. The police will search them upon their arrival.

If security personnel are on duty, they should be summoned immediately. They are trained in how to deal with the various ramifications of an arrest and they will also be able to assist in maintaining a physical "force" while waiting for the police.

If security is not on duty, obtain some assistance from someone else - be it another employee, a neighbour or whomever.

Ensure that when you call the police, you use the 9-1-1 system. That's what it's for. Tell the operator you are "holding a shoplifter." Ensure that the operator knows you are not a store detective, but an employee. This will speed up the response time. If there is any sign or potential of violence from the perpetrator, ensure you advise the operator - especially if the thief is not being co-operative.

If there is a potential for violence, remember there are no points for being a "hero." Your safety is paramount. A thief can always be caught. If they will not co-operate with you, that's fine. Go immediately to a phone and call the police

source: a police department in the western world

Here's a probably excessive guide for anyone who wants to shoplift while minimizing risk. Sorry if it's too dense. This is mostly about behavior and tactics, nothing technical. If I had ever shoplifted, and this weren't all completely hypothetical, I would never ever get caught, using these general rules:

Don't shoplift from liquor stores, anywhere the owner is strapped, anywhere that has iron bars over the windows, pawn shops, or generally places where the cashier has an unobstructed view of the room. They're ready for you. It's just a bad idea. If you're that good, by all means, it's just much too risky for my tastes. Instead, hit big retailers like Freddy's, Safeway, though non-franchised supermarkets aren't as likely to have stringent corporate loss prevention policies. The employees in big stores generally can't be bothered, and are too spread out to closely monitor the entire floor.

Stay. Calm. Act like you're there as a regular shopper. If you put on a face that says "I just got off work and am slightly annoyed but not threatening," people won't question you. Also, going around and browsing different aisles while pretending to compare things for a moment can help, but be careful of retreading ground more than twice.

Be clean, I think being shaving helps as a man unless you have carefully groomed facial hair, and avoid unkempt hairstyles, or anything else that might be associated with "unsavory folk". Dress and act like a middle class white person, even if you're not. Seriously, it throws people off the scent like nothing else

Once you're ready, survey the entrances and exits. Oftentimes, even places with theft prevention gates will have an entrance/exit without them. Find an exit that is as far from the cashiers as possible, and use that. If there isn't one, most of the time if you just walk by the cashiers with your stuff, then walk towards the exit like nothing is wrong, no one will question you, as the first cashiers you walk by will assume you're going to the next one, and the last will assume you went to a previous one, if they're even paying attention at all. Often just walking through/near self checkout is enough. I generally wouldn't advise these tactics if the store is completely dead. Also, NEVER EVER book it unless you've been caught, triggered theft prevention gates, or are RIGHT near the entrance, not that this will ever happen if you play it cool.

Even if a store has theft prevention gates at every entrance, they don't always work. There are a lot of different types and ways to get around them/test their efficacy. A lot of times they don't even work or don't detect items without "hard tags", the things you might find on clothing. This article gives great insights on how to beat security gates, in addition to providing other helpful links. I would recommend exploring them if you want to steal more high value items without risk: http://blog.envysion.com/retail/how-thieves-beat-security-tags-in-retail-stores.

Case the area you want to lift from for cameras by quickly scanning the ceiling and walls when employees aren't looking (although, even if there are cameras, the quality is generally shit, you can just keep your head down or wearing a baseball cap if you so choose, and it's not like you're really in danger from some shitty security guy who probably doesn't even review tapes anyways).

A bag can be helpful in places where there are camera blindspots, and at least one place in the store where often no one will be around for at around 10-20 seconds at a time. It's easier to find these spots than you might think. You really don't often need one though, and in supermarkets, it's usually MUCH safer to grab a basket and act like you belong. Bags are usually better for non anally observant smaller stores, which I'll go over in a sec.

To minimize risk when leaving, a bike is better than a car, cause you can just quickly unlock it, leave the parking lot through a place where cars can't go, maybe a little hillside at the edge of the parking lot, then disappear into a nearby neighborhood. It's also faster and more endurant than some theft prevention fool trying to run you down. You should never even have to use this advice if you follow the rest of the guide. Once you've hit a place successfully, this probably isn't very important.

If you live in CA, HA, IL, IN, IA, LA, ME, MA, MI, MO, NE, NV, NM, OH, SD, WA, WV, or WY, then congrats! You can find a lot of stores where you can just walk in and grab liquor.

If you do want to lift from a smaller place, there are a few things to consider:

Even if they prohibit bags, it’s not always a sign that they’re well equipped to deal with you. Test the waters by walking in with a backpack as if you’re just going about your day, acting like you’re there with the intent to buy a specific thing, and stay calm. If they call you out, give them your bag, look around, and leave. That person’s watching you. If you want, try again when a different cashier is there. Different people give different levels of shits.

Find a route through the store with the least amount of eyes. Don’t be overt about it, just notice it on your way in. The same logic applies with entrances/exits as large stores, but your pathing inside the store is more important here.

Once you’re in, check for cameras as you would at a large store, but be MUCH more careful, and don’t lift while in their FOV. They are probably actually watching them. If you find a spot where there aren’t cameras though, just casually grab whatever it is you want, walk to the blind spot, and put it in your bag.

When leaving after using a bag/pockets/coat, it can help ease suspicion to lightly furrow your brow, and shake your head slightly as if to say: "Nope, didn't find what I was looking for. I'm slightly annoyed, and just want to get on with my day."

Convenience stores are low return, and vary drastically in risk. I wouldn’t even bother, as the proprietors are often watchful/shrewd, and it’s kinda more dickish to steal from a small business than a large one that can absorb tons of losses.

Honestly, now that I've written this, it's kind of just like a trivially easy stealth game. I hope this helps you think about how to shoplift, purely intellectually of course. If I’ve offered any bad advice, or you have things to add, please let me know!